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Freelance Facilitators

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Simulation/Game

FREELANCE FACILITATORS

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Workshops by Thiagi Inc.

KEYWORDS: *facilitation; teamwork; team building; conducting simulation games.*

Basic Data:

Objective: To identify desirable characteristics of facilitators.

Target audience: Facilitators and team leaders. People interested in conducting simulation games and participatory exercises.

Playing time: 30 minutes.

Debriefing time: 15 minutes.

Number of players: 6 to 35. Best game involves 15 to 30 participants.

Materials required: Individual copies of the instructions handout and list of desirable characteristics of facilitators. Flip charts and felt-tipped markers.

There is an increasing demand for people with small-group facilitation skills. People who use interactive, experiential approaches for training or team building have very few sources that help them acquire practical skills in this area. This activity provides an on-the-job context for exploring some critical features of effective facilitation.

Flow of the Game

Advertise yourself. Distribute copies of the handout with instructions for playing the game. Ask participants to read the handout and write an ad to sell their services as a freelance facilitator. Announce a 3-minute time limit for this activity.

Form teams. Divide the participants into two to five teams of three to seven members each. The teams should be of approximately equal size (some teams may have an extra member). Ask teams to move away from each other.

Collect and distribute the ads. Collect the ads from each team, making sure that they all have a box number. Keep the ads from each team as a separate packet. Give the set of ads from one team to the next team.

Review the ads and select a facilitator. Ask each team to review the ads and select a candidate for the facilitator job. The team should involve all its members in this selection process and may use any criteria for choosing the facilitator. Announce a 5-minute time limit for this activity.

Assign facilitators to teams. Ask each team to read the box number of the selected candidate. Identify and assign each selected facilitator to the appropriate team. (In this process, each team will lose a member and gain a facilitator from some other team.)

Identify desirable characteristics of facilitators. Ask the facilitators to lead their teams through the next activity. Each team should make a list of desirable characteristics of facilitators. This list should be based on the criteria that the team used for selecting the facilitator. Team members may review the ads to identify desirable characteristics reflected in them. The team has 5 minutes to identify five or more desirable characteristics of facilitators.

Compare with the master list. Ask each team to read its list of desirable characteristics of facilitators. Record these items on a flip chart. Distribute copies of the handout with a list of "desirable characteristics of facilitators." Explain that this list is based on a review of the literature on facilitation. Ask each facilitator to conduct a discussion in his or her team to compare the team's list with the master list. Announce a 5-minute time limit for this activity.

Compare words with actions. As a final activity, ask each team to read the ad written by its facilitator. Ask the team members to discuss whether the facilitator's behaviors equaled, exceeded, or fell short of the promises made in the ad. Assign a 3-minute time limit for this activity.

Debriefing

Conduct a discussion of the insights gained by different participants. Here are some suggested debriefing questions:

1. What factors did you emphasize in writing your ad?
2. What factors did you use in reviewing different ads?
3. How did you feel about not being selected as a facilitator? For those who got hired, how did you feel about being selected as a facilitator?

4. Each team conducted its first activity (of selecting the best facilitator candidate) without a facilitator and the next activity (of listing desirable characteristics of facilitators) with a facilitator. Was there a difference in the performance of the team?
5. What is the most important insight you got from this activity?
6. Was there a difference between what the facilitator promised in the ad and how he or she behaved? If so, what do you think were the reasons for the difference?
7. What if each selected facilitator was paid \$50? How would your behaviors and reactions have changed?
8. What if the team was working on a very complex task under tight deadlines? Would you have selected a different facilitator?
9. If you were selected as one of the facilitators, how would you have behaved?
10. If we were to play this game again, how would you rewrite your ad?
11. Can you use this game for selecting facilitators at your workplace? What are the advantages and limitations of this strategy?

Appendix A

Handout 1: Instructions

In 2004, the Taksum & Howe Act removed most of the layers of the U.S. government. To compete, commercial and nonprofit organizations flattened themselves abruptly. There are no more departments or divisions, no more managers or supervisors.

Employees organize themselves into cross-functional teams and work on projects. Facilitators coordinate and support these teams. When a project is completed, the facilitator moves on to another team in another organization.

You are a freelance facilitator. You make a living by selling your talents to project teams. You are behind on your housing payments and desperately need a new assignment. Competition among facilitators is fierce. You need to present yourself attractively to potential teams that could hire you.

You decide to take out a classified ad in *Facilitator of Fortune* magazine. This magazine limits your ad to 75 words and prohibits the use of graphics. Write an ad in the space below to attract potential teams to hire you. Be sure to flaunt all your unique competencies and desirable qualities.

Include a box number in your ad. Choose any four-digit number that you can easily recall later.

Appendix B
Handout 2: List of Desirable Characteristics of Facilitators

Ability to improvise
Accountability
Assertiveness
Balance
Belief in participants' value
Confidence
Consistency between word and deed
Continuous learning
Creativity
Efficiency
Emotional detachment
Emotional resiliency
Empathic listening skills
Enthusiasm
Flexibility
Impartiality
Inclusiveness
Integrity
Interpersonal intelligence
Intuitive *and* rational techniques
Long-term focus
Neutrality
Objectivity
Open mindedness
Playfulness
Preference for diversity
Process expertise
Qualitative *and* quantitative techniques
Realism
Respect
Self-awareness
Self-esteem
Self-sufficiency
Sense of humor
Sense of priorities
Service mentality
Simplicity
Sincerity
Spirit of adventure
Technical expertise
Tolerance for ambiguity
Tolerance for lack of closure

Appendix B Continued

Trust
Truthfulness
Versatility
Willingness to share responsibility

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